

# ENHANCING IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AT SENIOR SERVICE COLLEGES

Thomas P. Galvin



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**Thomas P. Galvin**

**December 2016**

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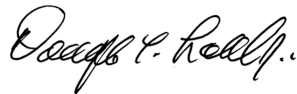
ISBN 1-58487-742-1



## FOREWORD

Senior Service Colleges (SSCs) impart three things as they prepare mid-career officers and civilians for entry into senior levels of leadership: skills, knowledge, and identity. The first two are givens in education. They are easy to define, easy to build a curriculum around, and easy to measure. However, when one considers many of the challenges and crises facing today's senior leaders, they tend to fall in the third area—the attitudes and dispositions of the leaders putting the skills and knowledge into practice. We tend to treat identity development as a natural and self-evident result of gaining such skills and knowledge, but it is not.

The military is one of several professions trying to solve the same problem of incorporating identity development into their educational curricula. While mentioned in the most recent Joint instruction, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy* (OPMEP), operationalizing identity into SSC curricula remains unspecified. In this Letort Paper, Dr. Galvin presents a thorough understanding of the problem of identity development and offers solutions based on his current work in the U.S. Army War College's (USAWC) resident program.



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## SUMMARY

Army senior Professional Military Education (PME) includes the Senior Service College (SSC) resident and distance programs along with fellowships at universities and agencies within the United States and abroad. SSCs are responsible for aiding in the transition of officers from the mid-level to the senior levels of command, leadership, and management. As the saying goes, “colonels run the Army.” The transition is significant; in addition to scaling up the technical expertise and know-how to get things done within higher level commands and staff headquarters, senior leaders also assume guardianship of the Army profession, which includes both greater personal and professional responsibilities, and greater scrutiny over their actions and decisions by those inside and outside the Service.

In addition to gaining skills and acquiring knowledge, moving from mid-career to senior leader requires a transition of one’s professional identity. The transition involves the letting go of one’s mid-career persona and adoption of a new persona, encapsulating values and dispositions expected of senior leaders to be able to operate in, and cope with, the strategic environment. It constitutes a personal journey from one level of leadership to another, and results in one’s ability to apply such skills and knowledge in future situations. It is also not an optional journey, as the failure to adopt and internalize those higher-order values and dispositions are directly linked to various destructive and unethical behaviors that the joint community wishes to avoid.

Unfortunately, identity development gets short shrift in PME in general and SSCs in particular. The

inculcation of professional values, resiliency, and critical and reflective thought are essential to properly operationalizing the skills and knowledge learned in SSCs; but these are all-around highly subjective, difficult to measure, and therefore difficult to develop educational activities. New policies for officer and civilian professional education include provisions for developing leaders, such as the recent inclusion of six Desired Leader Attributes (DLAs) in the 2015 E version of the Joint instruction, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy* (OPMEP), but it remains unclear how to operationalize those goals in curriculum development.

A 2014 initiative at the U.S. Army War College (USAWC) offers a potential model. A presentation of eight “role identities” as a descriptive tool to help SSC students understand how their PME would be applied in their future duties as senior leaders was included early in the USAWC curriculum. Short narratives of these role identities have helped orient students on the transitions they are expected to undertake and how they might cope with the strategic environment they are about to enter. Through the role identity metaphor, the goal was to situate the students in the positions of current and past senior leaders, helping them better appreciate the decisions and activities those leaders undertook so as to ease their own transitions. The initiative had some success, but it currently does not satisfy the overall need for fully incorporating identity development into the program. The purpose of this Letort Paper is to examine the overall challenges associated with identity development and propose an expansion of the USAWC initiative for broader application across SSCs.

This Letort Paper is organized as follows: First, it defines several avoidable problems associated with

the failure to properly develop identities among senior leaders and presents the case for a greater inclusion of identity development in SSCs. These include senior leaders who: are passively compliant rather than communicating with courage or taking risks with decisive action; fail to dissociate from mid-career attitudes and behaviors that may be disadvantageous for making well-informed decisions on highly complex matters; incur undue stress and health problems; or, succumb to ethical failure due to an inability to cope with the added responsibilities of senior leadership.

Second, various identity-related ideas and models are discussed from educational literature, as other professions have wrestled with similar challenges. From this emerges the construct of the **role identity** as a viable choice for expressing the attitudes and dispositions desired in the context of the SSC students' future requirements as senior leaders. The role identity is a metaphor that situates the students in the shoes of senior leaders, looking at challenges and decisions from the student's perspective.

The elements of the 2014 initiative are discussed third, in which eight role identities are described that satisfy the problems expressed and address the goals of new PME policies. These role identities were derived by examining the aforementioned problems and the requirements and expectations of senior leaders in practice. The eight identities are divided into two sets. **Persistent** role identities are expected of senior leaders on a 24/7 basis and are: steward of the profession, critical and reflective thinker, networked leader, and resilient leader. **Mission-specific** role identities are driven more by specific duties and requirements: strategic advisor and communicator, strategic theorist, strategic planner, and senior leader at the strategic level.

Fourth, recommendations are given for furthering the initiative across an SSC program using Bloom's affective domain to specify a progression of developmental objectives. These include establishing separate developmental objectives that are attainable through both formal education and the many available non-formal education opportunities that SSC environments provide. This allows for a way to provide a well-rounded development environment that goes beyond the classroom setting.

This Letort Paper concludes with further recommendations on how this curricular model could be generalized across both officer and civilian professional development programs.



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## INTRODUCTION

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In addition to gaining skills and acquiring knowledge, moving from mid-career to senior leader requires a transition of one's professional identity. The transition involves the letting go of one's mid-career persona and adoption of a new persona, encapsulating values and dispositions expected of senior leaders to be able to operate in, and cope with, the strategic environment. It constitutes a personal journey from one level of leadership to another, and results in one's ability to apply such skills and knowledge in future situations. It is also not an optional journey, as the failure to adopt and internalize those higher-order values and dispositions are directly linked to various destruc-

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Unfortunately, identity development gets short shrift in PME in general and SSCs in particular. The inculcation of professional values, resiliency, and critical and reflective thought are essential to properly operationalizing the skills and knowledge learned in SSC; but these are all-around highly subjective, difficult to measure, and therefore difficult to develop educational activities. New policies for officer and civilian professional education include provisions for developing leaders, such as the recent inclusion of six Desired Leader Attributes (DLAs) in the 2015 E version of the Joint instruction, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy* (OPMEP), but it remains unclear how to operationalize those goals in curriculum development.

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ment and propose an expansion of the USAWC initiative for broader application across SSCs. This Letort Paper is organized as follows: First, it defines several avoidable problems associated with the failure to properly develop identities among senior leaders and presents the case for a greater inclusion of identity development in SSCs. Second, various identity-related ideas and models are discussed from educational literature, as other professions have wrestled with similar challenges. From this emerges the construct of the “role identity” as a viable choice for expressing the attitudes and dispositions desired in the context of the SSC students’ future requirements as senior leaders. The elements of the 2014 initiative are discussed third, in which eight role identities are described that satisfy the problems expressed and address the goals of new PME policies. Fourth, recommendations are given for furthering the initiative across an SSC program using Benjamin S. Bloom’s affective domain to specify a progression of developmental objectives. This Letort Paper concludes with further recommendations on how this curricular model could be generalized across both officer and civilian professional development programs.

## **THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF SENIOR LEADERS**

A professional identity is described as “the perception of oneself as a professional and as a particular type of professional,” by Rue Bucher and Joan Stelling.<sup>2</sup> Vicki Schweitzer describes it as: “relatively stable and encompass[ing] the attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences that help individuals define themselves in a professional role.”<sup>3</sup> People often have multiple identities related to the various roles they

perform, and they tend to use labels to describe them.<sup>4</sup> These labels often take the form of roles such as professional or vocational (e.g., doctor, lawyer, teacher), familial (e.g., parent, sibling, son or daughter), or as relating to skills or hobbies (e.g., golfer, nature photographer, scouting leader). One can also perceive oneself as **not** carrying a particular identity, called a “NOT-me.”<sup>5</sup> A military example of this relates to the degree that some officers strive to avoid Pentagon assignments,<sup>6</sup> telling themselves and others something like: **I am a troop leader; I am not a politician.**

### **The Challenges of Leader Identity Development.**

Individuals internalize leader identities upon reaching the conclusion that, “Yes, I am a leader.”<sup>7</sup> Leader identities are naturally ambiguous,<sup>8</sup> because there are “no objective measures or indicators of whether one is or is not a leader.”<sup>9</sup> Rather, the ability to assume, and therefore internalize, a leader identity is contingent on a cycle of claiming and granting through social interactions.<sup>10</sup> What is claimed and granted as one’s leader identity can correspond to one’s leader behaviors, whether that is positive (e.g., transformational leadership) or negative (e.g., abusive leadership).<sup>11</sup>

Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership*, defines identity as “one’s self-concept” and states that leaders form leader identities when they: (1) self-identify as leaders; (2) are perceived as leaders by others; (3) are leaders in relation to others; and (4) are collectively endorsed by the organization as leaders.<sup>12</sup> ADRP 6-22 only refers to a generic “leader identity” and ties it to self-awareness and character development, but it does not specify how identity relates to specific roles such as: com-

mander, director, supervisor, advisor, spokesperson, crisis manager, moral exemplar, and others.<sup>13</sup> The doctrinal treatment is aspirational, such that acquiring a “complete” and “accurate” leader identity is sufficient for suitably enacting that identity in leadership situations.<sup>14</sup>

There are, however, challenges in developing and enacting leader identities. First, when organizations prescribe identity traits (such as listed in the ADRP),<sup>15</sup> they tend to be expressed in positive or conformist terms based on what the organization prefers, whereas useful identity development can run counter to such forms. One example is whistleblowing, an activity that is clearly warranted under certain conditions but disruptive and often discouraged in practice.<sup>16</sup> It is easy to declare particular traits as valued and to use the education setting as a means of reinforcing those values. It is quite the opposite to introduce them normatively through the actual lived experience of members when in the field, as they may run counter to the organizational culture.<sup>17</sup>

Second, identities change as roles change, especially when one’s role is significantly altered, triggering an **identity transition**.<sup>18</sup> These can be triggered in four ways: changes in the situation, conflicts among one’s own multiple identities, conflicts between one’s identity and behaviors, and from the results of self-verification with others.<sup>19</sup> But the presence of the trigger does not necessarily initiate the transition. Identities are resilient and resist change, and individuals are more likely to perceive the environment in ways that verify one’s own self-concepts.<sup>20</sup> Thus, while the military may expect that its officers undergo identity changes that parallel the assumptions of new authorities and responsibilities, this may not actually be occurring.<sup>21</sup>

Third, senior officers see their identities becoming increasingly focused. This is a by-product of changes in the salience and commitment of one's multiple identities. **Salience** regards how one's multiple identities compete with each other, and that an identity with a higher salience is "one that has a higher probability of being activated across different situations."<sup>22</sup> As officers rise in rank, especially at the senior levels, they tend to either shed a lot of old identities or push them further down the salience hierarchy. Salience, however, is perishable absent **commitment**, which regards the esteem or other positive feelings felt in exercising an identity.<sup>23</sup> Intrinsic (e.g., self-confidence) and extrinsic (e.g., prestige, honor, and recognition) rewards serve to enhance commitment to an identity.<sup>24</sup>

For example, a newly-minted infantry officer has numerous self-concepts drawing from any or all of the following: commissioned officer, leader, infantry, regimental member, tenant of a base, resident of a host town, college alumnus, member of a family, holder of a particular marital status (i.e., bachelor/ette, newly married, with kids or not), member of an ethnic or other demographic group, etc. Because they are formative, the salience hierarchy may be flat and the officer may show equal commitment to many identities. Senior officers (especially flag levels) will still harbor identities from a wide range of sources, but increased responsibilities and persistent demands will pressure them to make their "senior leader identity" consistently the most salient. Their other identities born of demographics and assignments may still be important to them, but their senior leader roles greatly influence how and how often those other identities are enacted, if at all. The salience increase alone of the senior leader identity can make for a difficult transition for some

officers who have progressed through a balanced salience hierarchy of military and non-military identities.

Failure to undergo the transition leaves individuals in environments that potentially violate their self-concepts and risks rendering them less capable as leaders.<sup>25</sup> As new senior officers assume responsibilities for the defense enterprise, such violations can be problematic for both the individual and the enterprise. Paul Oh and Dave Lewis said that “the military services must produce leaders who are not just war fighters, but executives possessing the managerial and political skills necessary for success.”<sup>26</sup> Officers who rise to senior levels via predominantly tactical assignments may see themselves as top-notch “war fighters,” however, they may be uncomfortable dealing with managerial tasks or politics. As a result, these up-and-coming “senior leaders” may suddenly become less effective, less adaptive, or less innovative. The ability to excel at these higher levels depends on their capacities to appropriately align their identities. Some may strike a balance and sustain their subject matter expertise, while others may transform their identities completely and leave their former selves behind. This is an individual leader’s decision, but it is one that requires self-awareness and the exercise of reflective thought, because changing one’s identity, professional or otherwise, is difficult and can be stressful.

### **Constructing One’s Leader Identity.**

The ordinary process of **identity construction**, defined as explaining “how an individual self-defines him- or herself changes in the context of organizational life”<sup>27</sup> is cyclic and involves interplay between

old identities and new ones. It is not a simple process of unloading a former self: "I am no longer an X," and declaring "I am now a Y instead." Rather, it is a social process in which individuals test and experiment with new self-concepts before internalizing them.<sup>28</sup> The process is not a comfortable one and often puts individuals in an in-between liminal state of breaking away from their previous selves while their new ones are not yet formed.<sup>29</sup> The "letting go" of a former self is very hard, and the uncertainty involved in transitions can drive individuals to stunt the process and give up.<sup>30</sup> Working through the doubt and alternative-weighting is a necessary process for allowing a new self-definition to emerge and become internalized.<sup>31</sup>

Organizations can aid in the identity construction process (although they can also interfere with it). The organization can institute rites of passage, where individuals have the opportunity to deliberately forfeit their former selves and make room for a new self.<sup>32</sup> Formal ceremonies, developmental relationships, and "organizational holding environments" can provide "psychosocial safety, acceptance, and challenge, to nudge the person along in his or her development [that] operates away from the stresses of the everyday work environment," which in turn can foster transitions when individuals face a major role change.<sup>33</sup> A second way is to provide an image of the new identity that individuals can adopt and tailor in a normative fashion, rather than rely solely on prescription. They should be representative of the significant changes that members experience as they transfer or advance into new roles within the organization, and provide an environment whereby members can improve their self-awareness and foster a transition.

The military provides identity construction opportunities in its senior PME institutions. All its pro-



grams constitute rites of passage for entry into senior leadership positions, which (along with promotion to colonel or equivalent) constitute visible triggering events that the officers are on track for advancement. They also provide dedication time for learning and self-reflection on the skills, knowledge, and dispositions required to assume higher-level positions, along with voluntary programs aimed at easing the transition. Again, these do not guarantee that the transitions occur. Absent a full appreciation of the contextual change of the new roles, such as the qualitative differences in responsibilities, professional networks, and representation of the Army, officers may fail to cognitively distance themselves from direct and organizational leadership.

### **Why Identity Construction Matters to Senior Leaders.**

Scholars have shown that the process of negotiating work identities is complex, and it is not necessarily the case that aligning one's self-concept closely with the organization's prescribed identity is beneficial to the organization.<sup>34</sup> Rather, completion of a transition can put both the individual and the organization at a disadvantage. For example, the organization may have set unrealistic expectations on the individual, or the work situation creates an internal conflict for the individual<sup>35</sup> or causes the individual to develop undesirable habits or behaviors that become internalized as norms.<sup>36</sup> Achieving the rank and education of senior leadership may end one transitional episode of an officer's career, but not the continuing process of learning and negotiating the work identity within and between senior leader positions thereafter.

Four problems provided below are offered as evidence that improper identity construction has an effect on military organizational performance and readiness. They each indicate either poor construction or subsequent deconstruction of senior leader identities.

*Succumbing to Passive Compliance.*

In a commentary about why many senior officers stayed silent over the Bush administration's approach to the war in Iraq, giving rise to the so-called "Revolt of the Generals," two USAWC scholars proposed that it was the: "prevalent 'Can Do' attitude and an enduring deference to authority."<sup>37</sup> They said that these ideas were implanted early in an officer's career when the concept of civilian authority was remote and abstract. Even though the officer may rise to positions of granting professional military advice to civilian authorities and likely would have developed the requisite knowledge and expertise to do so, if they have not shaped their identities in kind, they will be more likely to exercise deference when not fully warranted.<sup>38</sup>

A particularly important aspect of this is how the "Can Do" attitude can both generate passive compliance and encourage officers to mask their discomfort, especially if the officers are able to get by on their skills and competencies alone for a while and they can "wait out" the situation until the next assignment. The masking serves as protection against potential embarrassment or mistakes. Chris Argyris called these "traps" and demonstrated that they are ubiquitous in organizations.<sup>39</sup> As a profession, the military rightly abhors these traps, and expects its leaders to exercise loyalty and obedience in ways that overcome or set aside this discomfort,<sup>40</sup> especially in situations that

clearly call for action. Leaders who fail to act or speak up are thus viewed very negatively, as “careerists”<sup>41</sup> or those shirking their responsibilities,<sup>42</sup> so enduring this discomfort is clearly not the preferred approach within the Army. Argyris offers that avoiding these “traps” involves self-awareness. Leaders recognize that the misalignment exists, how they may be contributing to that misalignment, and that they are empowered and obligated to overcome it.

### *Growing Disidentification.*

This is a result of the narrowing of one’s salience hierarchy, whereby officers who are uncomfortable with their dominant “senior leader” role find themselves routinely being reminded of who they are not. Dr. Leonard (Bones) McCoy of *Star Trek*<sup>43</sup> fame exemplified this in his catchphrase, “I’m a doctor, not a [something else]!” When faced with that “something else,” leaders might respond in one of two ways: (1) the McCoy response, which amounts to avoidance, or (2) the preferred response of engaging with the right experts or becoming sufficiently knowledgeable in the matter.<sup>44</sup> Both types of response are common reactions to entry into more complex domains, such as moving from Service-specific issues to joint, from military matters to interagency, or from tactical to strategic, all of which are encompassed in the promotion from the mid-level ranks to senior leadership. The more disidentified an officer is to a role, the more likely that poor duty performance and ethical numbness can result.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu spoke of an individual *habitus*, a sense of identity that one carries on to new and unfamiliar situations.<sup>45</sup> This con-

cept would be familiar to officers whose early careers were exclusively battalion level or below and are experiencing their first Pentagon assignment, but who had not yet shed their tactically oriented persona.<sup>46</sup> At the USAWC, there always seems to be a percentage of students attending the resident program who conceive themselves as “not academically inclined” or “not writers or researchers,” who may be active participants in seminar dialogue, but struggle with meeting some of the formal academic requirements. Those who are predisposed to avoid what is outside their expertise will be more likely to shut out or disregard important aspects of complex problems, even if they have the skills and competencies to empathize with alternative perspectives, that is, to engage with the experts. It is not necessary that the leader converts a **NOT-me** identity into a **Me**. After all, not everyone excels in the Pentagon environment or publishes their SSC papers in leading journals. Rather, leaders need to exercise sufficient self-awareness to prevent the **NOT-me** identities from becoming liabilities and sources of myopia.

### *Stress and Health Problems.*

Events and situations that cause individuals to question “who they are” can be highly stressful and negatively impact one’s physiological and psychological health.<sup>47</sup> Along with the aforementioned stresses associated with the transition process, senior leaders are continuously under pressure to deal with other identity-challenging situations, such as organizational change or transformation efforts, difficult ethical dilemmas, and continual crises.<sup>48</sup>

The defense enterprise is constantly undergoing change or the potential for change. Some change

efforts are intentional and often carry a label, such as General Eric Shinseki's 1990s-era Army Transformation. Some are deliberate efforts driven by an internal or external event or pattern, such as the Army's response to the emergence of an Improvised Explosive Device threat after IRAQI FREEDOM. Others are the result of emergent phenomena that ultimately change the way the Army does business, such as social media and the dilemmas of encouraging or restricting their use over military computer networks. Then there is the potential for change, as evidenced in common strategic-level inquiries and data calls for various "what if" scenarios, such as, "What if X amount was cut from the budget?" or "What if we cancelled this program?" Finally, the Army often undergoes many organizational change efforts (restructuring, downsizing, new equipment fielding, doctrine rewriting, and so forth) at once. These can accumulate and create stress, sometimes called **change fatigue**.<sup>49</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this Letort Paper to characterize the increased complexity and prevalence of the ethical dimension of strategic decision-making and activity. It is sufficient to note that many decisions at the Army level weigh competing values. These can be between the needs of the institution and those of soldiers, civilians, and family members;<sup>50</sup> between the perspectives of the military and civilian authority;<sup>51</sup> between ethical and moral choices between the United States and its coalition partners during operations;<sup>52</sup> or among options or courses of action in the ethical application of landpower.<sup>53</sup> It is taken as given that the vast majority of senior PME students identify themselves as "ethical and moral leaders" who, in the words of General Montgomery Meigs, "Do what's right; sleep at night."<sup>54</sup> However, even after success-

fully navigating the ethical dimension of a tough strategic issue, wading through the “grayness” can be inherently stressful; and should the matter persist over a period of time, it could cause leaders to question their commitment to their identities.<sup>55</sup>

Crisis can sometimes dominate the time and energy expended by senior military leaders. The stakeholders are many, the stakes are often very high, and the repercussions of mishandling a crisis can be great.<sup>56</sup> But crises vary in nature based on how predictable they are and to what degree the military can influence the situation.<sup>57</sup> Calamities,<sup>58</sup> embarrassments, mistakes,<sup>59</sup> and instances of misinformation or disinformation<sup>60</sup> can generate particularly frustrating crisis situations and place senior leaders on the defensive against anxious external stakeholders (e.g., the recurrent issues about sexual harassment and assault). Important for a leader’s self-awareness and identity is the degree to which one is emotionally or spiritually aligned to handle the nature, scope, and frequency of the crises encountered. The political nature of many strategic level crises may not surprise, but might still jolt budding senior leaders. Even when handled well, crises can enact emotional tolls that should not be left unresolved.<sup>61</sup>

The importance of building one’s resilience as part of a senior leader’s identity cannot be overstated. Among his four attributes of generalship, General Meigs described the need for senior officers to have **energy**. Such leaders “influence the battle with their presence. The best ones have that uncanny knack of being at the critical point at just the right time.”<sup>62</sup> Generating that energy comes with building and sustaining a leader’s resilience.

### *Ethical Failure.*

At its essence, the narrowing of the senior leader's identity salience hierarchy can be described as potentially setting up a conflict between "I am **me**" and "I represent **us**." Senior leaders are "the ultimate representatives of the organization and its cause and purpose" and therefore assume "elevated levels of responsibilities and visibility."<sup>63</sup> Most of this attention is based on the office, meaning the position and rank held, which is temporary and conferred socially by the organization (under the authority of the Nation). However, when the individual's identity, the "I am **me**," improperly internalizes that responsibility and visibility, one risks acting too much in one's own self-interests rather than in the best interests of the organization.

Dean Ludwig and Clinton Longenecker described this as the "Bathsheba Syndrome," where successful leaders yield to the temptations of success and subsequently take worsening actions to cover up their misdeeds.<sup>64</sup> In such cases, one's senior leader identity loses salience, leading to vulnerability to temptation. Once succumbed, the leader must assert a new corrupted identity whose salience becomes very strong out of fear of being caught. Destructive or "toxic" leadership is another example of ethical failure,<sup>65</sup> one likely rooted in a pre-existing corrupted identity that becomes amplified after attainment of higher rank and authority.

Self-identification as a wholly ethical and moral leader is necessary but insufficient. Merely being a leader positions oneself in the line of temptation. The pressures on senior leaders to achieve, the complexity and fluidity of their environment, and the high expect-

tations they place upon themselves can cause leaders to question their commitment to their identity over time.<sup>66</sup> Overcoming that requires that leaders view themselves as guardians of the morals and ethics of the institution, showing the capacity and will to exercise coping strategies for such delicate situations.<sup>67</sup>

## **THE ROLE IDENTITY AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL**

Identity construction may be important, but incorporating it into professional education is hard to do. There have been several efforts at framing identity as a necessary part of advanced educational programs.

### **Comparing Role Identity to Other Metaphors.**

Learning and development literature is replete with models and methods for purposeful identity construction in learners. The following presents some common metaphors and their challenges as tools for identity construction.

**Competence and competencies.** A competency is an ability to put skills and knowledge into practice and has been pursued as an academic outcome since the 1970s;<sup>68</sup> scholars have vigorously sought to operationalize it. But due to the subsequent plethora of definitions and models, there arose many unanswered questions and much unfinished business regarding how competencies were defined, modeled, assessed, and developed within individuals.<sup>69</sup> Efforts to incorporate competencies as synthesized skills, knowledge, and dispositions among higher education in Europe devolved into measuring skills and knowledge only, essentially restoring the original problem.<sup>70</sup> Moreover,



some literature views competencies as skills, knowledge, and behaviors, which is far less conducive to identity construction. Although SSCs use competencies as a way of encapsulating important skills, knowledge, behaviors, and dispositions for senior leaders,<sup>71</sup> in practice they are used to promote understanding and do not serve as formal or informal learning outcomes from PME.

**Apprenticeships.** One framework of “professional education” included three components called apprenticeships that targeted different aspects of professional behavior. These were the intellectual apprenticeship (of knowing), skill apprenticeship (of doing), and apprenticeship of identity and purpose (of being).<sup>72</sup> Much of the pedagogy involved observation and imitation of applying knowledge and skills,<sup>73</sup> but has been studied mainly in entry-level professional or undergraduate programs with a skill component.<sup>74</sup> Broader application of this apprenticeship remains lacking, mainly because a systematic approach has yet to be developed,<sup>75</sup> and there is a risk that the identities developed during a PME program are merely “student identities” which are disposed of after graduation.<sup>76</sup>

**DLAs.** This is the route taken by the most recent joint PME policy, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy* (OPMEP),<sup>77</sup> and emerged as a result of extensive study and research by the military to instill “requisite values, strategic, and critical thinking skills to keep pace with the [changing] strategic environment.”<sup>78</sup> Six DLAs were developed for military officers, and the OPMEP mandated their inclusion in all joint-certified officer PME curricula. However, the OPMEP was not specific about how these would be operationalized, leaving them as a goal of resident and distance programs. Also, the officer education continuum depicted in the new OPMEP showed the DLAs being present

across all levels and did not provide cues as to how they might be differentiated at different PME levels, such as from intermediate (mid-career) level to senior level. Hence, they are insufficient as tools for professional identity construction.

Adding to these limitations are the natural challenges of finite time and resources. SSC resident programs operate on a fixed 10-month plan, and anything added to the curriculum requires that something be taken away. Administration of PME tends to emphasize formal learning and formal outcomes that can be systematically measured and analyzed.<sup>79</sup> This clearly disadvantages identity construction, which is individually undertaken and difficult to incorporate as an educational outcome. Thus remained a need for a construct for the SSC context to efficiently aid in the professional identity construction of senior officers.

The proposal, drawing from the USAWC resident program, is to use the **role identity** as the construct. Role identities can be a means of communicating the institutional requirements of senior leaders, because they describe the “expectations tied to a social position that guide people’s attitudes and behavior.”<sup>80</sup> This metaphor has several advantages. First, role transitions and their impacts on identity construction have been extensively studied.<sup>81</sup> It thus provides a solid theoretical framework to guide the development and usage of role identities in a PME setting.

Second, they can be used both normatively and prescriptively. They can be prescriptive by encapsulating the skills, knowledge, behaviors, and dispositions that the organization unequivocally demands, while being normative in how they are employed. This provides important degrees of freedom for individual students to reflect on where their personal career paths will take them.

Third, role identities are easier to communicate and apply within a formal educational context because they situate the students in their future roles as senior leaders. It gives them the ability to form mental pictures of the leaders they will become. It encourages students to think about what it takes to operationalize the knowledge gained at the resident program into a range of possible settings or scenarios. They provide a means of helping students to become more self-aware and reflect upon any shortcomings or deficiencies they have. They also bridge the gap between education and experience, as the mental pictures they formed in school are congruent with the environment they expect to enter. Even if the actual environment deviates from the ideal (e.g., behaves more bureaucratically than professionally), the mental picture shows the student “what right looks like,” which the student can apply in practice to shape the environment closer to the ideal rather than merely subjugating to it.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, role identities can be presented early in the program, encouraging students to construct and pursue individualized development plans moving forward. This encourages coaching and mentorship from others that supplement the formal educational outcomes, leaving the new graduate on a positive developmental trajectory back to the field.<sup>83</sup>

### **The Proposed Eight Role Identities of Senior Leaders.**

There are many challenges to prescribing the right number and set of role identities for senior leaders. First, they should be generally salient among all members of the senior leadership, both horizontally across functional lines and vertically from colonel to four-

star general. Clearly, some roles will require full salience and total commitment as part of accepting a position as senior leader. But, some roles may allow for less salience for certain leaders due to the context. One can imagine that dominant roles would differ among a garrison commander of a joint base, a strategic planner in a G-5, and a program executive officer for a major defense acquisition. However, given the right set of roles, senior officers would find all of them at least moderately salient in any context, and they would adjust salience as they moved from one role to another.

Second, they must reflect the nature of the transition to senior leadership, which represents a shift from being members of the institution to **embodying** the institution. The move from the tactical and operational context to the strategic environment is markedly different,<sup>84</sup> and the roles senior leaders play in representing the institution are far greater.<sup>85</sup> Rather than upward scaling of existing identities from one level to the next, the move to senior leader constitutes more of a role transformation, which requires a qualitatively different identity, one that must be developed over time.<sup>86</sup>

Third, the roles cannot number too many or else the salience and commitment to them might become too diffuse to be useful. Fourth, there has to be a structure or conceptual framework from which the identities were derived; otherwise, they could fall prey to constant redefinition based on the preferences of particular Army leaders. While these identities should evolve over time, they should not be subject to drastic change.

This Letort Paper proposes a framework that divides senior leader role identities two ways—four **persistent** and four **mission-specific**. Persistent role

identities are those that the Army expects all its senior leaders to assume with full salience and commitment on a 24/7 basis. Mission-specific role identities are those that are more context-dependent. The eight role identities are presented with the title and definition as currently employed in the USAWC resident program,<sup>87</sup> and a brief narrative explanation of its basis, as well as the associated challenges facing new senior leaders.

#### **Four “Persistent” Identities of Senior Leaders.**

The four persistent role identities are ones that all senior leaders should internalize into their self-concepts and sustain very high in their salience hierarchy. All four generally apply across all professions since each operationalizes matters of character and presence independent of the domain of expertise applied.<sup>88</sup> In an ideal situation, mid-career leaders should already be exhibiting these roles by virtue of their professional upbringing. The transition to senior leader increases their magnitude and scope. Thus, senior leaders should exhibit less variance in these identities than for the mission-specific identities in the next section. Persistent identities also carry beyond separation from military or federal service, and constitute a life orientation by which senior retirees and veterans can continue to contribute meaningfully to the profession through advice, analysis, commentary, coaching and mentoring, and wisdom.

*Steward of the Profession: Internalize guardianship of the military profession, the institution(s) that manage and exercise its resources and relations with society, and the communities that support them; lead by example of one’s moral character; demonstrate interpersonal maturity.*

Don Snider summarized the purpose of serving as a steward as follows:

Only by military effectiveness performed through honorable service by [the military] with high levels of trustworthiness and *esprit de corps*, and with members who steward the profession's future and self-regulate the profession to maintain its integrity – can the Army be a military profession that the American people trust to support and defend the Constitution and their rights and national interests.<sup>89</sup>

The word “trust” appears twice, and this is no accident. One is aimed internally to those serving the military profession, while the other is conferred by society, in this case “the American people.” Being a **steward**, one who exercises stewardship over the profession, is essentially one who internalizes and operationalizes trust. Stewards sustain the necessary self-awareness to ensure that one's own character and presence sustains that trust both internally to the profession and outwardly toward society.

Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 1 establishes **stewardship** of the profession as a responsibility of all Soldiers and civilians in the force; and those responsibilities include ensuring mission accomplishment and improving the Army.<sup>90</sup> Stewardship is a function of performing one's part in ensuring current and future success. Being a steward implies direct personal responsibility for leading and guiding the institution toward that success. It requires being more than merely moral and ethical, but a moral exemplar who conveys an aura of morality and ethics within and outside the organization.<sup>91</sup> More than being an expert in military matters, being a steward requires being the adjudicator of the Army's professional domain of expert

knowledge, who intuitively knows what is and is not and what should and should not be part of that domain.<sup>92</sup> More than being a developer of subordinates, stewards harmonize the domain of expert knowledge with the available capabilities and capacities of military practitioners, and serve as the engineers and architects of the processes and systems that move the Army into the future, regardless of whether that future is one of growth or constraint.

This role identity combats both the issues of passive compliance and ethical failure. Stewards inherently abhor complacency, causing the domain of expertise to degrade and become irrelevant in the face of competitors (both professions and nations) who are more adaptive and aggressive. Loss of relevance causes society's trust to decay. These are natural outcomes in complex systems. Keeping them functioning requires energy and initiative, and those who succumb to passive compliance exercise neither and risk getting in the way of other stewards trying to do the right thing for the profession.

At the senior levels, ethical failure means something very different than making a wrong choice. It includes both actions and inactions that potentially breach trust, and these take many forms: misuse of resources, making professional choices on the basis of personal benefit or self-interests, standing by, or failing to communicate truth to power. Senior leaders are expected to avoid individual errors just as junior leaders, but as stewards, senior leaders also exercise the vision to identify and correct systemic errors that are not attributable to any individual member. Such errors may include decisions made through inefficient, overly bureaucratic, or poorly designed systems and processes, and the inability or unwillingness to do anything about them.

Self-awareness is a defense against these failures. Stewards are judicious in which aspects of senior leadership are to become internalized into their self-concepts and which are not. As a general rule, stewards should avoid internalizing anything that is temporary—such as their rank or grade, duty assignments, and offices. For example, new senior leaders entering large staff organizations must fight against being channeled into confined roles, discouraging their initiative. Top senior leaders must fight against being shielded by their direct reports and immediate contacts from what is going on within their organizations or in the environment.

*Critical and Reflective Thinker: Discriminate relevant questions and identity problems; evaluate strategic options; challenge assumptions; learn continuously.*

While the mission-specific identities address how senior leaders apply their expert knowledge, this persistent role identity causes them to continuously develop and apply it. It incorporates various thinking skills (e.g., creative, critical, systems) with environmental scanning, ethical reasoning, historical understanding, and cultural awareness that leaders draw upon to engage with the environment.<sup>93</sup> Being a **critical thinker** (which is different from exercising the skill of **critical thinking**<sup>94</sup>) is one who is judicious in exercising these skills and capabilities and avoids guessing or fabrication. Being a **reflective thinker** (which is different from exercising the skill of **reflection**<sup>95</sup>) is one who is continuously exercising critical thinking on oneself, to have a better understanding of one's own personal and professional knowledge and heuristics in pursuit of better decision-making and communicating.



Moreover, it balances two (sometimes competing) approaches to making decisions and reasoning—the scientific approach and professional judgment. The way of science cuts through the complexity of the strategic environment, developing logic and rules derived empirically through inductive (collecting evidence to derive general observations) and deductive (apply the observations toward specific events or conditions) reasoning. But science has limitations and depends on the validity and trustworthiness of the model used to understand a real world situation. Judgment develops logic and rules differently, through diagnostic (or abductive reasoning, e.g., What is the best explanation for the current condition?) and prognostic (or forecasting, e.g., What is the range of probable or possible outcomes of the current condition?) questions. Judgment has its limits as well due to its subjectivity, which may constrain the leader's ability to convince others of a course of action. Strategic decision-making within the defense enterprise involves both evidential understanding and intuitive sense making,<sup>96</sup> and being a critical and reflective thinker arms leaders with the ability to strike a balance between science and professional judgment to strengthen one's arguments in favor of a course of action or in rendering advice to a national leader.

*Networked Leader: Display and influence a network of contacts among U.S. (military and civilian) and international peers for cooperation in pursuing national security objectives.*

Professions have communities of professionals, and these communities are active and engaged. Despite being globally distributed and sometimes work-

ing on professional matters independently, senior leaders are oriented outward—helping others solve their problems or garnering assistance to solve their own. As critical and reflective thinkers, senior leaders think and write; but as networked leaders, they **share**. There may be national secrets and matters of classification to protect sensitive information, but at its essence professionals do keep secrets. Once a lesson learned, theory, best practice, new idea, or anything that furthers the domain of expert knowledge is made available, then senior leaders have the additional responsibility to provide opportunities to make such knowledge available and foster connections among professionals.

Given the continuous rotation of senior leaders among duty assignments and the global distribution of leaders working in the same subfields (e.g., the “3” community of operations, the “5” community of plans), sustaining such networks is vital to ensure the continuity of strategies, plans, and programs. Senior leaders should remain mindful of their actions and decisions from past assignments, so that their successors can reach out to them as resources to solve novel problems. Senior leaders should strive to become the masters of a particularly important (and hopefully personally interesting) area of expertise and render themselves continuously available to share, and thereby further develop, that expertise. Addressing complex strategic issues requires having quality contacts across the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and/or multinational levels. It requires empathy and trust to incorporate such diverse perspectives and synthesize them into useful solutions and recommendations for Army leaders. Leaders must carry a propensity toward cultivating and sustaining such networks,

and resist the temptation to cull or prune it, for access to key subject matter expertise cannot always be predicted.

*Resilient Leader: Practice the ability of self and family to manage adversity; sustain physical and emotional health; internalize the military's values; thrive in strategic-level assignments.*

This role identity is largely about presence. Because adversity is a regular feature of the strategic environment, senior leaders must have the will and capacity to handle it. But, what constitutes having the will and capacity? **Resilience** is both a skill and a disposition, defined as “the developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, failure or even positive events, progress, and increased responsibility.”<sup>97</sup> The field of “positive psychology,” for example, has been interested in developing interventions to proactively build resiliency within military members to learn how to better rebound against adversity, as opposed to traditional clinical psychology, which responds to psychologically traumatic events.<sup>98</sup> SSCs have been leveraging research and best practices from this arena<sup>99</sup> to help senior leaders develop this skill, which involves a combination of self-awareness of one’s pre-existing resilient qualities and expanding their capabilities for application in the strategic environment.<sup>100</sup>

A great challenge for senior leaders is knowing one’s limits. Many senior leaders work long hours both because there is much work to do and because they are depended on so much by others, but this only begins the demands they face. Senior leaders, especially those in leadership positions over geographi-

cally distributed elements, can expect to undergo a great deal of travel, which consumes time and creates stress. Senior leaders also often need to be reachable on short notice for crisis situations, high-level meetings, and even social occasions to represent the command or organization. Being at such a constant state of personal readiness and responsiveness is fatiguing for senior leaders and their families.

Senior leaders also must understand how they impact others. There is a fine line between dedication and workaholicism, or other work-life problems. The former is indicative of a healthy devotion to duty whereby one's physical, mental, and emotional capacities allow for the prosecution of one's duties. The latter can be dangerous, as exceeding one's capacities can lead to mistakes and omissions, causing increased stress and reduced morale among others. Moreover, senior leaders who expect too much of themselves create unhealthy and possibly toxic command climates, driving peers and subordinates into the ground unnecessarily.

#### **Four "Mission-Specific" Identities of Senior Leaders.**

The mission-specific role identities represent those whose salience and commitment can change depending on particular mission or duty requirements. They also tend to involve the specific application of the domain of expert knowledge associated with the military profession. All four are at least partly dependent on the four persistent role identities. They are also qualitatively differentiated from mid-level leadership; this is indicated by the use of "strategic" in all their monikers. Organizational-level leaders may have internalized analogous role identities through their

mid-careers, but entry into “strategic” leadership necessitates a transformation. Merely expanding scope, as was the case with the persistent identities, is generally insufficient to excel as a senior leader.

*Strategic Advisor and Communicator: Provide credible and informed advice to senior military and civilian leaders; synthesize expertise and experience; communicate courageously and speak “truth to power.”*

Strategic advisors are courageous communicators<sup>101</sup> who provide credible and informed advice to senior military and civilian leaders.<sup>102</sup> Professional judgment in matters of advice and communication stem from a full understanding of the environment through scanning, cultural awareness, ethical reasoning, and understanding the implications of the advice given or communications made.<sup>103</sup> This role identity differentiates from organizational leadership in two important ways—the handling of expert knowledge and the audience. Organizational leaders are more likely to render advice on their relatively narrow areas of expertise to senior leaders or other internal audiences, and are generally given carefully-scoped authorities when dealing with external audiences. These communications are made simpler through the use of cultural protocols that help mid-career officers (e.g., action officers or unit staff officers) package their analysis and recommendations for quicker generation and easier consumption.

As senior leaders progress, these constraints dissipate while the responsibilities increase. Senior leaders are expected to become more generalist in their orientation, and to be capable of providing advice regarding all aspects of the domain of expert knowledge.

Their audiences become increasingly external, especially with the political leadership of the government and key stakeholders such as defense industry leaders. This presents political empathy as an important qualitative difference from organizational leadership. Senior leaders must empathize with the perspectives of these external audiences to render advice that is accurate, timely, and useful for decision-making while not conveying any sense of political or personal bias or inconsistencies across audiences.

*Strategic Theorist: Internalize the history of warfare, develop strategic concepts and theories, and integrate them with the elements of national power.*

Some senior leaders tend to unnecessarily view the role of a theorist through a **NOT-me** lens, such as “I am not the equivalent of Clausewitz and Sun Tzu, therefore I do not see myself as a theorist.”<sup>104</sup> However, acting as a **strategic theorist** is a common yet unrecognized aspect of being a senior leader. It is how critical and reflective thinking is operationalized to drive organizational change, to innovate, and to ultimately out-manuever and defeat an adaptive enemy.

“Theorist” is short-hand for “artist, architect, and engineer.” The artist in the senior leader creates — they connect lessons learned from current and historical events and apply vision, wisdom, and creativity to craft imaginative ideas and construct narratives that communicate those ideas. The architect in the senior leader renders such ideas into concepts that can be presented as blueprints of feasible, suitable, and acceptable solutions. The engineer in the senior leader translates the blueprints into intent and structure for the solution that provides the requisite detail to develop strategies, plans, and programs. The particu-

lar duty assignment and responsibilities of the senior leader will influence the exercise of artist, architect, or engineering roles enacted. In all three sub-roles, strategic theorists recognize time as a factor, and that good solutions from last year may have to be reconsidered today.

Doctrine is one important area where strategic theorists make clear contributions. Organizational leaders are more likely to employ and suggest changes to doctrine as written, but senior leaders critique and write it so that it can be broadly applied across the joint force as needed. The same skills, knowledge, and values apply to a specific context, such as combatant commands or coalitions, where doctrine may require significant adaptation to be useful.

*Strategic Planner: Practice the design, development, and execution of strategic plans; employ force and other dimensions of power; unify military and non-military activities; apply ends, ways, and means.*

**Strategic planners** exercise strategic planning, “the process of determining the long-term vision and goals of an enterprise and how to fulfill them.”<sup>105</sup> In the military, such planners design, develop, and execute strategic plans in support of national security objectives. They are masters of change — determining and codifying approaches toward ends, ways, and means to reframe the institution’s strategic direction, restructure it, revitalize it, and renew its human capital.<sup>106</sup> Strategic planners operationalize strategic theories, translating doctrine and concepts into actions that unit-level organizations can execute effectively and efficiently.

As different from other levels of planning, strategic planning is **anticipatory**.<sup>107</sup> Strategic planners display

propensities for securing and sustaining the long view and resisting (or at least mitigating) environmental pressures toward satisfying only short-term exigencies. They avoid myopia and operate comfortably across the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational levels.<sup>108</sup> They are unbothered by complexity. They adapt systems, and acknowledge and address the political dimension of military operations without compromising the principles of campaign planning. Salience and commitment depend upon the degree of direct exposure to planning efforts, either as a planning team member or a supervisor of a planning effort.

*Senior Leader at the Strategic Level: Provide strategic vision and direction to guide organizational climate, culture, and change; bear responsibility and risk for what the respective organization does or does not do; coach, teach, and mentor others.*

All leaders bear responsibilities toward their assigned organizations, but the organizational environments that senior leaders face is vastly different from the unit-level organizations where most mid-career officers had previously been assigned. Combatant commands, service components, major service commands, the Joint and Service Staffs, and other organizations to which senior leaders will be assigned are highly diverse organizations. They comprise a balanced mix of active and reserve component service members, senior civilians, and contracted civilians. They integrate and interoperate across the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational environment to connect national security policies with strategies, plans, and programs. They are heterogeneous, especially the combatant commands whose organizational structure



and manning levels differ greatly according to national security interests and partnership requirements in their geographic or functional areas of responsibility.

Most matters of leading organizations—climate, culture, change, learning, developing people, etc.—are familiar to mid-career officers, but senior leaders employ more indirect than direct means. Global teleconferences among communities of practice are commonplace. Commanders and directors spend only limited face-to-face time with their charges, and instead rely on remote or virtual supervision or the occasional “All-Hands” events to get everyone together. Otherwise, they are absorbed by the demands of external stakeholders. New senior leaders serving as division chiefs or other equivalent positions exercise team leadership in “counsels of colonels” (as they are called in the Army), crisis action teams, working groups, or planning teams, often including or connected with non-military entities such as Department of State representatives, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Department of Homeland Security, and many others.

The challenge for new senior leaders is to become players in this different environment and not spectators. They must transcend the narrow scope of their duty assignments, not allowing them to squelch initiative or curtail communication. They need to collaborate, negotiate, and get involved in order to break through (the inevitable) deadlocks between diverse perspectives to solve problems. And they never view “their” problem in isolation. The top senior leaders set the example for their active and decisive professional staff environment through their open, transparent, and active engagement with Congress, civilian national leaders, multinational partners, and others.

The most difficult challenge in sustaining the long view concerns both accomplishing the mission and developing people. This is often inhibited by the demands of the bureaucracy and the constant short-term exigencies of the strategic environment. Senior leaders recognize what they can and cannot control, but they do everything they can to avoid inflicting the same “jerk-around” reactivity upon their own organizations. They leverage the talent available to judiciously accomplish the mission, giving well-conceived and well-communicated tasks that avoid wasted effort. They also afford them room to grow, learn, and reflect to become better junior and mid-career leaders.

### **Summary.**

The role identity serves as a useful metaphor for guiding the transition of leaders from mid-career to senior leader. These role identities should avoid devolving into a mere repackaging of skills and knowledge the way the competency construct has. They also rely more on self-reflection and self-assessment than the apprenticeship model, which is designed for entry-level professionals and rely heavily on expensive mentors. The new DLA model in the joint PME policy will be addressed in the next section regarding role identities across the PME continuum.

Thus far, the role identities have only been used in introductory courses at the USAWC resident program over 2 academic years. This past year, the new Introduction to Strategic Studies course used them as the basis for the students’ initial writing assignment: a reflection paper on how the case study of the Persian Gulf War from a strategic perspective illuminated key areas that students needed to develop during

their resident program year. They had to choose two of the four mission-specific role identities to structure this self-reflection exercise. Initial informal feedback from the faculty was favorable: that the assignment was constructive for the students' individual learning plans. However, the true value will not be known until much later in the academic year, and possibly, not until after they have returned to the field and performed senior leader duties.

## OPERATIONALIZING ROLE IDENTITIES IN SSC CURRICULA

This section addresses the **how** of incorporating role identities into a curriculum, and provides recommendations for curriculum developers.

### Setting Identity Construction Objectives Using Bloom's Affective Domain.

One cannot use the same learning objective paradigm to express identity development outcomes as for skill and knowledge acquisition. One might provide formally scheduled opportunities for students to get together and "network," ostensibly to improve the development of **networked leaders**, but that does not ensure that students will become **networked leaders**. It remains up to the student to determine, through self-awareness and self-reflection, what each of the eight role-identities mean and how they coalesce into a personal whole that can be expressed in one's Individual Learning Plan or Individual Development Plan. Attempting to foist activities with prescriptive outcomes onto a normative process, such as role identity construction, risks confusion and frustration for students.

In a related study in business education settings, two business scholars found that values and ethics in business curricula suffered for several reasons, three of which are informative for PME.<sup>109</sup> First, identity construction is treated as self-evident and obvious in the context of the coursework. In this view, teaching about stewardship will suffice to cause students to internalize being a steward. Second, educational activities outside of ordinary coursework are justified solely in terms of reinforcing coursework, rather than on their own merits. Third is a bias toward “scientific objectivity,”<sup>110</sup> which is consistent with the findings of professional military educators who lament a culture oriented on system analysis.<sup>111</sup>

The method of operationalizing the role identities offered in this Letort Paper addresses these challenges. It avoids setting identity construction objectives per event. Instead, it sets broader objectives at significant milestones in the curriculum, such that the developmental effect is continuous and cumulative. This can be accomplished using the affective domain of Benjamin Bloom’s taxonomy as its foundation.

The *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* by Bloom and his colleagues divided educational objectives into two domains—cognitive and affective—listed below:<sup>112</sup>

- Cognitive—Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation
- Affective—Receiving, Responding, Valuing, Organizing, Characterizing [reframed presently as “internalizing”]<sup>113</sup>

The affective domain represents objectives modeling variance in emotional development through an educational setting, “from simple attention to selected phenomena to complex but internally consistent qual-

ities of character and conscience.” When originally written in 1964, the taxonomy was prepared such that each level in the affective domain was connected to a level in the cognitive domain—for example, at the lowest level, the presentation of **knowledge** required the student’s willingness and readiness to **receive** it.<sup>114</sup> **Comprehension** was linked to **responding**, representing the student’s emotional appreciation of the values presented; and **application** was linked to **valuing**, accepting and committing to the newly provided values.<sup>115</sup> Thus at the lower levels of both domains, the approach reflected a one-on-one correspondence between a skill and item of knowledge acquired in the cognitive domain and inculcation of the associated value in the affective domain.<sup>116</sup>

The higher levels of Bloom’s affective domain, **organizing** and **characterizing**, involve value systems. **Organizing** a value system involves taking “disparate values” and “[bringing] these into an ordered relationship with one another.”<sup>117</sup> **Characterization** is so named because the inculcation of this value system tends to be “[internally] consistent” to the student and “characterize[s] the individual completely.”<sup>118</sup> One scholar summarized the applicability of the domain as follows:

Its connection with ethical motivation and attitudinal development makes it worthy of further research. . . . The continuum begins with passive compliance. The middle range expands to satisfaction with personal beliefs. The highest level results in the consistent practice of an autonomous systematic philosophy of life.<sup>119</sup>

Recent studies by professional educators in several disciplines have taken interest in employing Bloom’s affective domain as a means of managing affective outcomes at a program level, such as teaching busi-

ness ethics,<sup>120</sup> inculcating service as an outcome of the business education experience,<sup>121</sup> and improving patient care among nursing students.<sup>122</sup> These studies showed that the affective domain could be effectively used to establish educational objectives representing changes of identity and the “belief that outcomes in professional practice depend on the teaching/learning process.”<sup>123</sup>

This encourages its use as the basis of establishing similar affective outcomes for SSC students undergoing the transition to senior leadership. Using the eight role identities as a basis, the approach is to establish benchmarks for students to internalize the role identities at different stages of the affective domain, from **receiving** them during indoctrination through the demonstration of having **internalized** them at graduation and in their return to the field. The following is a description of how this would be done using the current USAWC’s resident curriculum as applied to U.S. Army officers.

The communication of War College selection and the subsequent in processing and receipt at the War College is a point where students are **receiving** the role identities in the forms of official communications from the Army and advice from superiors and mentors. However, they generally go no further affectively as they are either continuing to serve in their current duty positions, or their selection is last minute and they have limited time to internalize the meaning of the selection.<sup>124</sup> At the beginning of the resident program, they undergo foundational events<sup>125</sup> that introduce them to the academic environment and nature of being a senior leader. These events are assessed at the comprehending level in the **cognitive** domain and **responding** level in the affective, by which students respond and are comfortable with discussing or writ-

ing about what being a senior leader means to them. The development across the core courses functions at the **valuing** level—as students develop the skills and knowledge (that are associated with the building blocks of the curriculum) with their personal development as senior leaders, they attach worth and value to them.

Although **synthesis** (Bloom’s 5th level) is achieved within the core subject areas, **synthesis** across them comes in experiential activities, staff rides, senior leader engagements, and various other activities that take place near the end of or after the core courses.<sup>126</sup> It is during these events that students are expected to move beyond **valuing** and into **organizing**, whereby they integrate the values and attitudes associated with senior leader skills and knowledge with their pre-existing professional identities.

For example, during the core courses, students gain skills and knowledge about stewarding the profession at the senior level and then synthesize it with other skills and knowledge relating to strategic leadership. At that point, they attach **value** to the meaning of being a **Steward of the Profession**. Later, the curriculum requires wider synthesis of course materials across strategic leadership, national defense, military strategy, campaigning, and force management in “CAPSTONE” exercises or other culminating events. As an outcome of these events, students **organize** and prioritize the values of being a **steward** with those expressed among the other seven role identities (e.g., **theorist, planner, senior leader, advisor/communicator**, etc.) into a personal value system.

At graduation and subsequent first post-SSC assignment,<sup>127</sup> the developmental objective is that this new value system becomes **internalized** and the tran-

sition to senior leadership is complete. Ideally, the subsequent duty environment should reinforce the value systems incorporated in the SSC environment and not cause graduates to return to the behaviors and attitudes exhibited prior to SSC attendance (unfortunately, the ideal is not always met<sup>128</sup>).

In addition to addressing individual student needs, the developmental objectives should satisfy the goals expressed in the OPMEP for supporting the DLA. For example, internalizing the role of **steward** satisfies the attitudinal requirements inherent in DLA No. 4, *Operating in Intent through Trust, Empowerment, and Understanding*; and No. 5, *Making Ethical Decisions Based on the Profession of Arms*.

*Recommendation 1a: Add developmental goals to the overall SSC program objectives that include the incorporation of the eight role identities at the internalized level of Bloom's affective domain. The developmental goals should satisfy the goal of incorporating the DLAs from the OPMEP into the program.*

*Recommendation 1b: Add subordinate developmental goals at key phases during the SSC program that reflect progress toward the overall developmental objectives, and that formal curricular activities outside of the core curriculum should orient on a developmental goal.*

### **Leveraging Extracurricular Activities as Developmental Opportunities.**

Adding developmental outcomes adds risk. First, there will be a tendency to want to govern developmental objectives the same way as learning objectives. While they can be accomplished simultaneously in



part, such as how core subject courses can spur attitudinal changes, overall they require different pedagogies – those of **formal learning** and **non-formal learning** – and SSC programs must balance both.

Despite its use of seminar learning techniques, SSCs exercise a **formal learning** pedagogy. This is learning that takes place in a formal educational setting (e.g., the SSC resident program location with its classrooms, auditoriums, and other facilities); is intentional from the learner's perspective; is structured in terms of learning objectives, time, and support (e.g., OPMEP); and leads to certification or qualification (in the Army, it is Military Education Level [MEL] 1).<sup>129</sup> As an SSC, the USAWC is subject to accreditation by both the Army and the joint community, with the OPMEP and service-specific requirements as the basis.

As a learning outcome, however, identity construction follows a **non-formal learning** pedagogy.<sup>130</sup> This is learning that can occur both inside and outside the formal education setting; is intentional from the learner's perspective; is structured in terms of learning objectives, time, and support (e.g., can be codified as part of an individual development plan); yet does not lead to certification. No institution can certify that a non-formal learning outcome is achieved; rather it develops over time based on the individual learner. This is consistent with the view of Army leader doctrine that sees military education as just one developmental step, with the reinforcement (i.e., salience and commitment) occurring through field experience.<sup>131</sup>

The challenge for an SSC is that it is organized, structured, and resourced around formal learning.<sup>132</sup> Its missions and activities originate from the OPMEP and are codified in curricular guidance, syllabi, classroom activities, oral and written assignments, evalu-

ation mechanisms, and other activities. These lead to the institution's abilities to rightfully and fairly confer MEL 1 certification and, as appropriate, the Masters of Strategic Studies degree. These are also governed by the requirements for joint accreditation, whose satisfaction is therefore the highest priority concern for an SSC. Meanwhile, the formal learning needs can be readily translated into resource requirements such as time, facilities, subject matter expertise, and staff and faculty needs (both spaces and faces). Although efficient for budgetary and human resource management purposes, this approach to managing PME has been criticized for its "systems analysis" approach that serves only skills and knowledge transfer.<sup>133</sup> However, this approach is not sufficient for fostering identity construction.<sup>134</sup>

In contrast, non-formal learning is opportunity-based. In addition to the SSC curriculum, non-formal learning can occur during the process of crafting an individual learning plan, self-directed research, voluntary attendance at lectures and conferences, extra-curricular activities that foster professional networking, personal reflection, conversations or interviews with experts or peers, and coaching, counseling, or mentoring from others within or outside the SSC. In effect, an SSC can provide such opportunities, but the outcomes are not deterministic.

For example, a high-quality lecture may provide helpful knowledge toward understanding strategic planning, but must be supplemented with other activities, including the student's self-reflection, to encourage commensurate identity construction as a **strategic planner** with the necessary salience and commitment. The same lecture may foster this development in different ways and at different times, some of which will

depend on a student's pre-existing identities. Did the student already work in a strategic planning group or carry the specialty of Functional Area 59 officer? If so, the lecture may have been reinforcing. Has the student had no planning experience, never having served in a G-5 or J-5? Development, then, may be sparsely perceived through the lecture and indeed through the SSC experience until the graduates find themselves years later in billets that require planning. Another example is the operationally oriented officer with no Pentagon experience and for whom defense management is a foreign concept. Non-formal opportunities can help students meld the concepts of defense management with an appreciation of the Pentagon environment via fellow students that have served there, such that later enterprise-oriented assignments are less mysterious or discomfoting.

From a faculty perspective, particularly in the resident SSC environment, formal and non-formal learning opportunities compete with each other for time and energy. In essence, SSC faculty members are chartered with doing both,<sup>135</sup> but are limited in their ability to do so. Faculty members coach their students as part of an individual development process, but it is not necessarily their primary function and competes with other academic duties.<sup>136</sup> Military faculty, civilian faculty who are retired military, and "pure academics" approach these developmental responsibilities differently, but overall student-faculty engagement tends to prioritize coaching toward meeting the SSC's formal academic requirements.

From a student perspective, these learning opportunities compete as well. Deadlines for graded events like papers, presentations, and preparation become naturally salient and, therefore, tend to fill any avail-

able time, imposing upon student desire to engage in extracurricular developmental opportunities. The casualty in this process is reflection, and becoming a **critical and reflective thinker** requires both the knowledge of its importance and the internalization of its practice in one's identity. SSC programs should offer opportunities for students to engage in reflection on a routine basis so that it becomes a normalized behavior in the future work environment. Journaling is offered as a voluntary approach for students;<sup>137</sup> however, it is not presently required, and making journaling a more formal part of the program must account for several pitfalls.<sup>138</sup> These can be addressed through the judicious establishment of a journaling program that balances demands on time and preserves suitable confidentiality, enhances faculty coaching and mentoring, and fosters the desired developmental outcomes.<sup>139</sup>

*Recommendation 2a: Incorporate developmental goals into student individual learning plans, and design the plans to encompass the students' entire transition from mid-career to early duty experiences.*<sup>140</sup>

*Recommendation 2b: Pursue the inculcation of executive coaching into SSC.*<sup>141</sup>

*Recommendation 2c: Pursue the inclusion of a reflective journaling program into SSC.*

### **Generalizability Across SSC Programs and PME Continuum.**

To this point, the role identities have been developed and implemented solely in the context of a single SSC resident program. However, the role identity

metaphor is broadly applicable to professional education settings and self-development in the field. These role identities are derived based on roles enacted by senior leaders in the field independent of their prior career paths and independent of their status as senior military leaders or senior civilians. Using the Army as an example, these role identities describe what “colonels should be doing” regardless of how they got to become colonels,<sup>142</sup> and the same applies for GS-13s, 14s, and 15s who also attend SSCs. Although there are differences between how military officers and civilians may enact them, the role identities do not inherently differentiate officers from civilians. A **Steward of the Profession** is a steward regardless of status, and so on.

SSC experiences come in three ways—resident, distance, and fellowship programs. Distance programs are designed to achieve similar outcomes as their resident counterparts, but take longer because the students are: (1) actively serving in the military or as civilians and therefore must complete their school assignments outside of duty hours or, (2) are reserve component students with civilian jobs and reserve responsibilities. Distance curricula forgo programmed non-formal education opportunities and concentrate on formal pedagogies. Meanwhile, fellowships have very limited pedagogical connection to resident or distance SSCs beyond having to generally satisfy the same OPMEP requirements.<sup>143</sup> The services set agreements with academic institutions, government agencies, international partners, and other external organizations to provide suitable educational and experiential learning environments that bring diversity to the defense enterprise, overcoming the disadvantages of bypassing formal PME and staying more tightly connected

with peers. The normative aspects of the role identities help harmonize the different educational experiences the students will receive, and focuses the students on who they must become to succeed as senior leaders.

The role identities are also generalizable between SSC military and civilian students. Both military and civilian leader development policies and programs exercise a continuum that governs education and experience at different levels of proficiency and responsibility. For military officers, the OPMEP governs programs at several levels, identified as “Joint Introduction” for pre-commissioning programs, “Joint Awareness” for entry-level officer education, “Phase I” for intermediate officer education, “Phase II” for SSC programs, and “CAPSTONE” for flag officer education.<sup>144</sup> Each phase constitutes a nexus of skills, knowledge, and dispositions reflective of both increased responsibilities in joint matters and increased complexity and scope of the environment. While civilians do not progress in rank or responsibilities in the same manner as officers, the Civilian Leader Development Continuum similarly stratifies development goals whereby civilian leaders progress from their capabilities to “lead teams and projects” to capabilities and capacities to “lead the institution.”<sup>145</sup> The continuum provides the structure for leadership development opportunities for civilians progressing from GS-12 to GS-15<sup>146</sup> while also accounting for civilians who laterally enter at higher rates such as political appointees.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, satisfying the requirements of the continuum for senior-level civilian leaders includes senior-level PME.<sup>148</sup>

This suggests that the role identity metaphor can be extended more broadly across the officer and civilian development continuums from entry to executive levels. As mentioned before, the OPMEP did not pre-

scribe how the DLAs were to be differentiated among Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) Phase I, II, and other programs for the purposes of curriculum development and performance metrics. Normatively, it is possible to take the eight role identities and develop equivalents that would be appropriate for direct and organizational leadership levels for military and civilians alike, and furthered into the executive levels of leadership for programs such as CAPSTONE and PINNACLE. The persistent role identities would change in scale, while the mission-specific ones might see greater differences in scope. Together, across each level, it would be possible to generate a narrative description of how one's identity should form and help coaches, teachers, and mentors orient and develop others more readily using non-formal educational means throughout one's career.

An example of how this could be done was included in the Army's leader development strategy of 2009, in which short narrative descriptions of the transitions among **pre-commissioning**, **entry-level**, **junior**, **mid-grade**, and **senior-officer** levels were offered, although these were intended to lay out the "accrual of skills" in prescriptive fashion.<sup>149</sup> These narratives could easily have been adapted as identity construction goals, whereby leaders would internalize the dispositions appropriate to exercise skills and knowledge at commensurate levels of leadership. Narratives for Stewards of the Profession, for example, would still exercise the highest end of Bloom's affective domain for each PME level. At the entry-level, junior officers and GS-12s would internalize a sense of resources accountability, trust-building, and localized civil-military relations. Intermediate-level officers and civilians extend this narrative to include internalizing

the building blocks of sustaining the profession, such as its expert knowledge and enforcement of standards and norms institution-wide. Full guardianship of the profession, as previously described, naturally and logically follows as the next progressive step for senior leaders. Non-formal educational activities would thus be extended to other levels of professional military and civilian education programs as appropriate to encourage the desired identity construction.

*Recommendation 3: Develop a role-identity based continuum that orients educational and experiential learning towards identity construction from pre-commissioning through to senior leadership levels for military and across equivalent levels for career civilians.*<sup>150</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Identity construction is a crucial part of leader development, particularly within a profession where a select few within a society are chartered with both maintaining a domain of expert knowledge vital to the security of a nation and serving as exemplars of the highest-order of professional service. Yet, it defies the ordinary process of skill and knowledge acquisition found in formal education, and is difficult to operationalize across large, diverse, and distributed professional military officer and civilian communities. Identity construction is an individual journey, one that budding senior leaders must undertake to acquire the needed dispositions to put the skills and knowledge of SSCs into practice and keep the military organization acting as a professional one. Among the metaphors available for identity construction, the role identity metaphor seems to have the most promise, and the



eight role identities proposed in this Letort Paper offer a useful first effort at crafting a general purpose normative description of what any given senior leader should internalize as they undergo the transition from mid-career leader. It also has promise as a vehicle to operationalize identity construction across the PME continuum.

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97. Fred Luthans, Gretchen R. Vogelgesang, and Paul B. Lester, "Developing the Psychological Capital of Resiliency," *Human Resource Development Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1, March 2006, pp. 25-44.

98. Michael D. Matthews, "Toward a Positive Military Psychology," *Military Psychology*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 2008, pp. 289-298.

99. For example, see the Army's Comprehensive Soldier & Family Fitness campaign, available from [csf2.army.mil](http://csf2.army.mil).

100. Luthans, Vogelgesang, and Lester, p. 28.

101. Fredric M. Jablin, "Courage and Courageous Communication Among Leaders and Followers in Groups, Organizations, and Communities," *Management Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2006, pp. 94-110.

102. Nielsen.

103. Waters.

104. While not a direct quote, it draws upon an "anti-intellectual" attitude that critics suggest characterizes some resident Senior Service College (SSC) students. George E. Reed, "The Pen and the Sword: Faculty Management Challenges in the Mixed Cultural Environment of a War College," *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 72, 1st Qtr. 2014, pp. 14-20 includes a recounting of some of the criticisms.

105. William C. Bean, *Strategic Planning That Makes Things Happen*, Amherst, MA: Human Resource Development Press, 1991.

106. William Y. Frentzel II, John M. Bryson, and Barbara C. Crosby, "Strategic Planning in the Military: The US Naval Security Group changes its strategy, 1992-1998," *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 33, Iss. 3, June 2000, pp. 402-429.

107. Leonard D. Goodstein, Timothy M. Nolan, and J. William Pfeiffer, *Applied Strategic Planning: A Comprehensive Guide*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1993, p. 3.

108. Gerras, ed., *Strategic Leadership Primer*, pp. 29-30.

109. Susan D. Steiner and Mary Anne Watson, "The Service Learning Component in Business Education: The Values Linkage Void," *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 2006, pp. 422-434. The fourth reason given was based on faculty reticence to indoctrinate or "impose their personal values on others" which is not relevant in PME since it requires the adoption or sustainment of institutional values coded in doctrine.

110. *Ibid.*

111. Reed, Bullis, Collins, and Paparone.

112. David R. Krathwohl, Benjamin S. Bloom, and Bertram B. Masia, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives – Handbook II: Affective Domain*, New York: David McKay Company, 1964, pp. 49-50.

113. OPMEP uses the term "internalizing" instead of characterizing. Krathwohl *et al.* actually characterized all affective activities as 'internalization' and that the steps in the domain represented degrees of internalizing emotions and values. The use of "internalizing" as the substitute verb in the OPMEP for the highest domain is interpreted as meaning full internalization and inculcation of the prescribed values into one's identity, and this text will follow that view.

114. Krathwohl *et al.*, p. 49. It was not a one-to-one correspondence at the top of the hierarchy (see p. 50), but there was a prescribed sense of alignment between the hierarchies nonetheless.

115. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

116. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

119. M. F. Reeves, "An application of Bloom's taxonomy to the teaching of business ethics," *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 9, No. 7, pp. 609-616.

120. *Ibid.*

121. Steiner and Watson.

122. Patricia R. Cook and Janice A. Cullen, "Caring as an Imperative for Nursing Education," *Nursing Education Perspectives*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 2003, pp. 192-197.

123. *Ibid.*

124. Galvin, Dissertation.

125. This is defined for the AY16 curriculum as inprocessing, "Zero Week" which includes seminar formation, convocation and related welcome events, and introduction to senior leader resiliency (health and welfare, for example), and the "Introduction to Strategic Studies" course that introduces the students to the fundamental building blocks of the curriculum through a case study of the Persian Gulf War. "Core" subject material that addresses the Joint Professional Military Education (PME) standards under the standards that OPMEP follows.

126. For AY16, these events were: an oral comprehensive exam, electives, completion of the Strategy Research Project (a 5000-6000 word paper on a relevant strategic topic), staff rides to New York City and Washington, DC, elective courses, Army Leader Day, the U.S. Army War College (USAWC) Strategy Conference, and the National Security Seminar that occurs the week of graduation.

127. Galvin, Dissertation.

128. Thomas P. Galvin, "Army Leadership Development Succeeds When Bridging Professional Education and Experience," *ARMY Magazine*, Vol. 65, No. 6, June 2015, pp. 22-24.

129. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Understanding the Social Outcomes of Learning*,

Paris, France: Center for Educational Research and Innovation, 2007, p. 18.

130. *Ibid.*

131. Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 7-0, *Training Units and Developing Leaders*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012, pp. 1-2.

132. Reed, Bullis, Collins, and Paparone.

133. *Ibid.*

134. For the military perspective, see George B. Forsythe, Scott Snook, Philip Lewis, and Paul T. Bartone, "Professional Identity Development for 21st Century Army Officers," in Don M. Snider and Lloyd J. Matthews, eds., *The Future of the Army Profession*, 2nd ed., Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2005, pp. 207-208; For a broader professional perspective, see Colbeck, pp. 9-16.

135. Reed, "The Pen and the Sword."

136. Joan Johnson-Freese. "The Reform of Military Education: Twenty-Five Years Later," *Orbis*, Vol. 56, No. 1, 2012, pp. 135-153. The USAWC's most recent inculcation of faculty standards mandate that Title 10 faculty sustain balanced portfolios among teaching, scholarship, and service duties. Teaching already dominates faculty time, and advisory duties are an extension of teaching.

137. Meinhart. This paper is a required reading earlier in the USAWC curriculum and emphasizes the meaning and importance of reflection during the War College year and reflective practice thereafter.

138. Shaun G. Jamison, *Online Law School Faculty Perceptions of Journaling as Professional Development*, Doctoral Dissertation, Capella University, ProQuest Dissertations, 2007, p. 34.

139. Thomas J. Hendrix, Maureen O'Malley, Catherine Sullivan, and Bernice Carmon, "Nursing Student Perceptions of Reflective Journaling: A Conjoint Value Analysis," *International*

*Scholarly Research Network (ISRM) Nursing*, Vol. 2012, No. 317372, 2012, available from [search.proquest.com/docview/1040691970/fulltextPDF?accountid=4444](http://search.proquest.com/docview/1040691970/fulltextPDF?accountid=4444), accessed on November 5, 2015.

140. Galvin, Dissertation.

141. Galvin and Allen.

142. Galvin, "Army Leadership Development Succeeds When Bridging Professional Education and Experience."

143. OPMEP, pp. A-A-4, classifies these fellowships as governed under the same requirements as the service SSCs.

144. *Ibid.*, pp. A-A-A-1, classified these five levels in the "Joint Emphasis" line in the officer PME continuum.

145. U.S. Department of Defense, Department of Defense Instruction 1430.16, *Growing Civilian Leaders*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Personnel and Readiness, November 2009, p. 16, hereafter referred to as DODI 1430.16.

146. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

147. U.S. Department of Defense, Department of Defense Instruction 1400.25, *DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Training, Education, and Professional Development*, Volume 410, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Personnel and Readiness, September 2013.

148. DODI 1430.16, p. 13.

149. George Casey, *Leader Development Strategy for a 21st Century Army*, Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army, November 2009, p. 12, available from [cgsc.edu/ALDS/ArmyLdrDevStrategy\\_20091125.pdf](http://cgsc.edu/ALDS/ArmyLdrDevStrategy_20091125.pdf), accessed on October 6, 2015.

150. Henning Salling Olesen, "Professional Identity as Learning Processes in Life Histories," *Journal of Workplace Learning*, Vol. 13, No. 7-8, 2001, pp. 290-297.

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